SECTORAL REPORT

YUKON DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

YUKON 2000

Building the Future

Yukon Government

C U L T U R A L I N D U S T R I E S

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An Introduction to the Cultural Industries

Why talk about cultural industries?

There are two components associated with economic development in the territory. One is generating economic activity. The other is keeping money and people here.

Cultural, in addition to providing income and jobs, plays an important role in stemming the transient nature of people and money by adding to the quality of life in the Yukon for all residents.

The Yukon must emerge as a culturally satisfying place to work and raise a family or people will continue to take their dollars and head south.

An Introduction to the Cultural Industries

Cultural activities in the Yukon are as varied as anywhere in the country. Both professional and non-professional people partake in dance, music, theater, writing, film, heritage activities, and visual arts like crafts, photography and painting.

However despite this diversity, common constraints can be found amongst all cultural groups which inhibits the sector's economic development and its contribution to our overall social and economic health. Likewise, common options for dealing with the constraints and common opportunities exist for all the cultural players.

The cultural industries workshop met on two occasions and decided to present common themes in this paper. It is felt that the economic aspects of culture must be addressed with some unity since government and the sector itself must build unified cultural policy.

A very common theme throughout discussions is the attitudes of others, government people and those in private industry towards artists. A major constraint for the sector is the warn-out notion that the lifestyle of artists is one of poverty and struggle. It affects the cultural industry directly when a musician, for example, is offered an opportunity to perform but is only provided with expenses and no fee the artists labour and time. It's the equivalent of asking a new business to open its doors with volunteer labour to keep costs low. Other business which seek government funding or private capital are not prepared, nor expected to do the same.

Professionals, in many cultural disciplines, while sought for their talents, are continually under-valued in the market place because of the "lifestyle" we expect artists to have. This constraint is noted here but its affects are evident through this report.

The following pages outline other constraints and options facing the cultural sector in the Yukon.

Markets and Audience

Constraint:

A major constraint for the Yukon cultural community is our small population. Our small numbers make viable economic returns hard to come by and further preclude cost savings which can occur when producing larger volumes for the market.

Options:

- Take further advantage of the short tourist season by offering more cultural activities and diversifying what is offered tourists. Specifically, a summer arts festival could draw tourists while greatly increasing opportunities for local artists.

- Develop export markets for products like sheet music, records and cassettes, scripts or craft products to name a few. In particular, there is already a small production and distribution industry in the Yukon for recordings. It could be enhanced with government help to become a self-sufficient private enterprise.

Constraint:

Entry into export markets, or even local markets, is difficult. No marketing strategies currently exist.

Option:

- Development of a co-operative marketing strategy so individuals don't have to bear the entire burden of marketing their project. Such a program would address labelling and packaging, promotional material, including artists' profiles, and licencing. A strategy has to identify markets and market stratification.

A strong "Yukon" flare to the products is often beneficial to marketing. However, a distinctive or unique product can succeed in both local and tourist markets without specifically having direct Yukon identification.

The potential for products with "universal" themes succeeding on their own merits should not be neglected in the strategy.

Government and private cooperation is needed to do initial work identifying market potential and baseline research.

- A prerequisite to market expansion is stable product supply: high quality, consistent supply, competitive prices.

- Improved communication amongst artists, their representative organizations and the market is needed to assure market needs are addressed.

Training and Technical Support

Constraint:

Poor facilities, or lack of facilities, in which to train and develop skills have hampered the industry. Training and development are very much at the heart of the sector's economic future.

Options:

- Develop a summer art school, along the lines of the Banff centre, which would provide a focal point for culture and provide training through resident and visiting instructors, local artists. A summer school, for example, could showcase its activities at the festival discussed under markets and audience. The new arts centre in Whitehorse will provide superb opportunities for this option.

- Provide additional funds to send artists outside Yukon to train.

- Begin training programs for artists in area of management and business.

Constraint:

Like any business enterprise, culturally oriented activities require funds, both operating and for capital to develop.

Options:

- Loans and grants , either private or from government, are needed to finance activities. Consideration should be given to the high risk involved in the industry. In other words, risk for early ventures should be weighed against higher returns as the artists develop through experience.

● Capital to help amateurs make the jump to a professional full-time artist once they reach that skill level.

Facilities

Constraint:

Recent plans to build new facilities in Whitehorse to accommodate cultural activities will address current deficiencies for the most part. But outside the city, rural facilities are inadequate.

Options:

● Develop joint-use projects in rural areas instead of single-purpose buildings. Assessing the communities needs may show a coin laundry, a gallery, and an artists workshop and a sport recreation facility could find homes under the same roof.

● In Whitehorse especially, urge the city government to reexamine bylaws for doing business from the home. Many cultural activities have minimal impact on residential areas but fall under rigid zoning guidelines.

● Seed money to develop "incubator" malls where crafts people could work and sell their products.

Production and Distribution: Doing Business

Constraint:

The high cost of materials for crafts people, painters, potters and others in less direct ways limits the viability of the cultural industry.

Options:

● Form co-ops or initiate co-operative efforts for purchasing and transporting materials to and from the south.

● Urge businesses to provide space for artists to reduce costs in exchange for special breaks on zoning bylaws. This is done in other cities.

Government

Constraint:

Government currently does not have a clear policy on culture. Culture is administered in many departments with culture competing with sport activities for attention. Culture simply is not viewed as a business endeavor.

Options:

- Fund and treat culture separately within government and with a view to improving its viability as an industry rather than as a recreational pastime.

- Bring a centralized understanding of culture to all areas of government concerned with cultural activities.

- Streamline contact with the industry by lessening government red tape, and making services more accessible to the artists.